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Victoria Street Newz

"All the news that fits, we print"

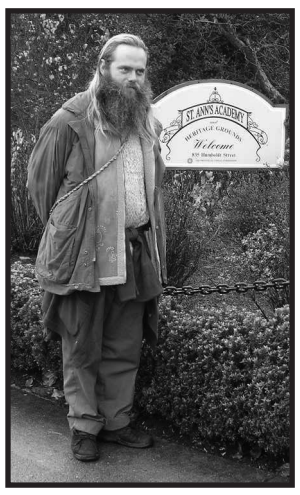
August 2008

Vol. 5 No. 5

Davids vs. the Castle

by David Arthur Johnston

In the beginning…



I don't use money (as it, unavoidably, supports a prideful construct). I sleep outside (primarily in Beacon Hill Park, at least until this adventure). In the months leading up to the end of 2003 the number of 'deterrent events' was increasing with condescending and threatening police and grounds-keepers hunting out sleepers, and the application of 'bum-away' (undiluted fertilizer- ground up fish) on known sleeping spots. Added with the winter conditions, my fatigue brought with it a consideration that my innocence was not being 'presumed of' in my ability to sleep conscientiously. So, I was inspired to take issue.

This was an account of a campaign to determine the right to sleep. It has become a dance where conscientiousness reveals itself to be transcendent of the 'rule of law'.

Patience be with us all, for the bad and the good.

June 14th, 2008: re-establishing the 'commons'

I've said before that this no longer is about the 'homeless,' so all the well wishers of 'you people' or of 'those people' can maybe take a moment before their blessing to understand that what is going on here in Victoria is not just about the legality of tieing tarp-ropes to trees, it is about the fact that there is no public property.

The problem is this - the moment a 'commons' is re-established it will instantly house a refugee camp, catalystically revealing the fallacy of capitalism and this pretty little 'tourism industry' here in Victoria. Of course, so be it.

So, onward to the most important court case in Canadian history...

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Thanks for your support!!

About Street Newz

"BUILDING BRIDGES IN THE COMMUNITY"

Coordinator: Janine Bandcroft
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Founded in 2004, Victoria Street Newz welcomes written submissions including interviews, event reviews, cartoons, poetry, photographs, or artwork, but we can't guarantee everything will be published. We reserve the right to edit, and will not print anything libelous, racist, sexist, or homophobic. Letters sent to the editor are assumed to be for publication, must include phone number or email (if possible, for confirmation) and may be edited for length. You can publish using a pseudonym, or anonymously.

We are devoted to a triple bottom line philosophy - concerned about our environmental and social, as well as financial well-being.

You can contribute to social change by supporting the Victoria Street Newz team, by pondering the root causes of poverty, and by working for peaceful, non-violent change.

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Submissions (due by the 1st Friday for the next month's issue), letters, or donations can be delivered to our mailbox at:

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JUST ANOTHER RANT - ABOUT CUBA

by Janine Bandcroft

a big huge thank you to everyone who helped while i was away on my journey of a lifetime to cuba with the pastors for peace!!

for two weeks i travelled on a school bus through the usa, stopping each night in a different city, meeting with wonderful american activists, picking up humanitarian aid (altogether 15 'caravans' collected 100 tons of it!), learning about cuba's history, about the unjust imprisonment of the 'cuban five' (who found anti-cubans terrorists in miami and 10 years later are still in various american prisons unable to visit with their families - i guess they turned in the wrong kind of terrorists), and establishing a community unlike any other.

we crossed into mexico, over 100 of us altogether, on july 3rd. the american authorities intervened, as they have for these 19 years that the pastors for peace have performed this social justice mission. they asked us all to stand aside while a big x-ray machine scanned all the vehicles, and when they started to steal computers we activated our support networks. thanks to all who responded and contacted media, members of parliament and the american authorities.

after we made our phone calls, a grand total of one local media bothered to show up, and we shut down the american/mexican border. you'd think that'd be news, eh?! there we were, dancing and clapping and chanting 'cuba si bloqueo no' and 'si se puede' as the semi-truck and commuter lines grew ... we shut down an international border for half an hour. i still can't quite believe it. it's definitely one of the finest acts of peaceful and non-violent civil disobedience i've ever participated in - or documented.

your phone calls and emails made a huge difference - on our return journey, after a week in cuba, after we cleared customs (some uttering the words 'on advice of my attorney i respectfully refuse to answer that question' when officials attempted to probe for unnecessary details), the american authorities gave us our computers. we put a prepared plan into action - some brave caravanistas carried those computers back across the border into mexico for transport to our friends in cuba.

the cuban people absolutely love the pastors for peace. everywhere we went we were greeted with hugs and smiles, often flowers, fresh fruit juice, and coffee. everywhere we stayed we were adequately fed and comfortably housed. it was truly overwhelming.

our days were busy, meeting with government officials, health practitioners, historians, cuban 5 advocates, religious leaders, musicians .... it didn't take me long to realize how little i actually know. my eyes were opened in many ways -- life in cuba isn't perfect, but i'm convinced that the cuban revolution really was and is intended to be about and for the working people. those words are even written into their constitution.

visiting cuba is like walking into history. we met revolutionaries who fought alongside che guevara, praising his devotion and determination, speaking of his refusal to leave anyone, friend or foe, to die on the battlefields.

2009 marks the fiftieth year of the cuban revolution, the 48th year of the american government's conspiratorial attempt to kill the cuban people through an illegal and immoral blockade of trade and information and travel, the 20th pastors for peace friendshipment. despite all the imperialist efforts (the familiar bay of pigs, the unfamiliar years of cia funded contra-style mountain-dwelling rapists and murderers) the revolution continues. there's no doubt that changes are happening - some for the better and some for the worse. overall i got the feeling that the cuban people are blessed to live in a nation that emphasizes health and education above everything else, and i hope future generations will continue to appreciate what their revolutionaries fought and died for.

there are no millionaires in cuba. instead, there's a guaranteed, state controlled, income. everyone's relatively 'poor' (though they all seem to have 'enough', and they live in sharing and caring communities), they're healthy and educated, with a sustainable agricultural system that renders monsanto and dupont's genetic engineering manifesto impotent.

there's a doctor in every community, with clinics and hospitals nearby. there is access to all kinds of alternative healing options including acupuncture, aromatherapy, physio and massage therapy, and much more.

the fancy resort hotels built in the 90s and 20s concern me, also that cubans don't have a 'free' press (though their newspapers are very informative and less advertisement-driven than those of the capitalist empires and, it's interesting to note, this month's 'dear couz' was censored by the lt-gov's office). and, cubans can't travel off the island unless they're invited. these seem oppressive restrictions, and they are, but the logic behind them, the motivation, is grounded in a concern for protecting the peoples' revolution. the american government funds a miami based mafia to the tune of millions, perhaps billions, of dollars, and the cuban government attempts to protect the people from brain numbing fox-news style bullshit propaganda. there is no corporate advertising in cuba. travel restrictions avoid a brain drain - their needs have been provided from cradle to grave. why the resorts? who knows. and, do they really want to be at the olympics?

rather than occupy this entire newspaper with thoughts and observations about cuba, i invite you to read my blog, listen to audio, and look at photos at cubajourney.blogspot.com.

hasta la victoria siempre!!

photos - top: in mcallen texas, with jim and claudia, the day we invented the word 'vegiana' or 'vegiano' - vegan, in spanish!

top right: some of the donated aid and one of the multi-coloured buses. 8 buses were taken to cuba this year, over 100 altogether are on their streets.

middle: stealing computers, shutting down the border, walking the retrieved computers back to mexico.

bottom: one of many cuban billboards honouring the revolution.

Jun. 18th, 2008- day 3 of trial...

Media has been acceptable with much national attention to the fact that every municipality may soon be open to sanctioned tent-cities... court has been amazing- the judge is seeing the implication of her position and the city is relaying what endangered plants the homeless are sleeping on.

Jun. 19th, 2008: verdict rendering

How else to explain it I don't know. It was perfect. Not only our lawyers, Catherine in particular, but the lawyers for the city and province were as well acting as conduits of... God, really. Every second thing they submitted was, de facto, of benefit to us. There was nothing they could do, it really was not an adversarial process. Both teams were working for the supreme outcome. The judge knows the implications of whatever ruling she will give.

The entire thing is now in the hands of the court and the judge is reserving her ruling (I've been told that it could be anywheres between tomorrow and 8 months from now). The acceptable ruling will be striking the anti- 'temporary abode' bylaw and suggesting to the city that it would be in its best interest to set aside an area best suited for 'temporary abodes.'

Tue, 24 Jun - Ridiculously misleading Times Colonist article + my response

RE: Johnston released after weekend arrest. Police ask if it was a set-up job

The story is misleading. Firstly, there was no court order prohibiting me from being on the grounds of St. Ann's. The police charged me with breaching a condition that hasn't existed since Oct. 2006. They deliberately abused process, wasting the time of the jail and the Supreme Court, in an effort to head off an attempt at a tent-city. If they had waited a few more hours they would have found us at Cridge Park, mayhaps ready to be arrested for Obstruction of Justice. I was released Monday afternoon. I would, very much, like to know which 'friend' called the police, if that truly is the case.

Right now, a Supreme Court Judge is rendering all the data gathered from a Constitutional Challenge against the Corporation of the City of Victoria's 'anti-temporary-abode' bylaw.

Some people might want to think that having the right to sleep for free will bring economic collapse, I would suggest these people imagine what is going to happen when gas gets up to $3.00 a litre. That is the question here- "Would we rather see the roughness of tent-cities or the order of internment camps?" or to put it another way "Do we want to sell our souls to this grossly shallow tourist industry?"

Fri. Jun. 27th, 2008: the sun sets on the British Empire

Tent-city.... I've been singing it over and over to the tune of 'God Save the Queen' - "Tent-city tent-city. Tent-city, tent-city. Tent-Ci-i-teee, tent-city. Te-ent-ent-ity."... and so forth.

There will be much talk about strategy and how to respond when the ruling strikes the bylaw ... come on down and play the wise calmness in the face of provocation (AKA Spot The Agent).

Really good articles in the recent Focus and Monday magazines and at the Tyee (from Andrew MacLeod. this is the most comprehensive article with links to all the official arguments) - thetyee.ca/News/2008/06/20/Commons, and if you can find the article from the Driftwood on SaltSpring it is really good.

Jun. 29th, 2008: may these words have power

Apparently, until they prove otherwise, the Times Colonist is a hellish piece of crap that has no regard for the truth and to support their business, or more, to not actively promote its correction or demise, is to be complicit in a lie.

Pretty much the same goes for the cops. Until they apologize for their premeditated illegal arrest of me, ... and until they make true amends it will become catalystically obvious to even the most deluded patriot, that the police, too, have no regard for the truth.

There was a meeting last Friday at the courthouse lawn that went pretty good. This thing (the movement) really does have a life of its own and, because it is a true cause, everything it needs will be provided.

CAMAS Anarchist bookstore (camas.ca, camasbookstore.blogspot.com) will be accepting and holding donations towards the coming legal and sanctioned tent-cities. The meetings still will occur every Monday and Fridays at noon at the courthouse lawn. The Cardboard Army will be enjoying their first trek into the 'public' during the Canada Day events in Victoria. Come to the meetings to get the morning martial and yogic training schedule.

Patience be with you. You are the hero and it is only your conditioning that would have you believe otherwise.

July 2nd, 2008: tent city = refugee camp

The 'Crown' is a psychotic mafia-type entity (it is really the same spirit that Rome was, but in this instance we will refer to it as the 'Crown'). It got a whole lot of assholes together and stole all its means of survival. It made ships and traveled the world 'colonizing' (raping and murdering until the natives complied) what is now known as the 'Commonwealth.' Have all the pity in the world for all the victims in every one of these 'countries.'

Canada is truly no different. In their psycho-babble we are a Constitutional Monarchy- some words to confuse all those whose diets consist of TV, fat and sugar. Which means we play at every citizen getting a say in governmental affairs through a process of 'democracy.' We are not told the truth, which is, the Crown still has complete executive power over every ruling in every court and every bill that tries to get passed in Parliament (AND they are also the entity which determines which crimes will go in front of a judge).

The problem, now, is that getting rid of the Crown means acknowledging that everyone who thinks they own land, however long they have been living on it, doesn't. This problem will be easier faced because of the catalystic trauma we all face because of an over-populated world that ceases to be sustainable- the ones too afraid to face death will assert their right to set up internment camps to contend with the rising social unrest... the ones not afraid to die will beat them to the punch and establish autonomous refugee camps.

Governments will be replaced with friends just helping friends and it will work so beautifully that even while half of us starve to death we will do so smiling, enjoying the fact that our loved ones will reach a place of true freedom where the idea of 'profit' is only a lesson of history.

We need not promote the end of private property. We only need to enjoy the notion of never having to pay taxes or rent ever again.

... and beyond all that, the war is over the moment you remember that you are the Buddha. Patience be with you.

July 14th, 2008: punk show went well

bunch of donations, good words spoken to attentive and interested crowd, a song about the chocolate dumpster bringing a large donation of chocolate... oh those punks.

Whatever style or class we've found ourselves attached to, we are still all in the same universe and peace is the thing strived for by all. Or everything goes to hell because people are addicted to their hate and too lazy to focus on the courage to rather die than kill. Whatever, at least I won't be a slave (at least not to the baby-raping monster that pretends to have authority over the land... I AM a slave to fate, as all things are). Some people may hate the bums and the junkies- the worse crime is pride. If loathing were justified, pride would be the root thing that would be worthy of it. Pride pride pride... the heart of the devil.

love you all,

David Arthur Johnston

For more information: www.angelfire.com/apes/hatrackman
www.loveandfearlessness.com - film from filmmaker Andrew Ainsley

Resident Code of Conduct and Agreement

Camp Quixote - Olympia, Washington

This statement is to be read, (or, if reading is difficult, it will be read by an assigned camp leader) and signed as a written covenant of good faith and promise of adherence to the requirements of the City of Olympia Ordinance for homeless encampments, between members of Camp Quixote and The Unitarian Universalist Congregation. As a community of love, we all understand the need for guidelines for protection and safety.

As a resident of Camp Quixote, now located on the property of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation, I have read and understand the two agreements which follow and which are necessary for our camp community.

1. Our code of conduct states that there will be no alcohol, drugs, violence, stealing, or forced sex in our camp community. In addition, we will follow this and the requirements of the Olympia ordinance, which additionally prohibit (i) weapons in the camp (including knives over 3.5 inches), (ii) no unapproved open flames, (iii) trespassing or loitering on private property in the surrounding neighbourhood, or littering on such property or in the encampment.

As members of Camp Quixote, we will be reminded of these rules at our regular meetings and will enforce them. In addition, for the safety and well-being of us all, no uninvited guests will be welcome. Visiting hours are between 9 am and 9 pm and visitor must be accompanied by resident at all time. We will uphold this commitment.

2. As a resident of Camp Quixote, I agree to hold The Unitarian Universalist Congregation harmless if something happens to me on its property where we have currently been granted sanctuary.

To the Editor .....

Re: Massacres and Profits: A Brief History of the Olympics

I was surprised that in her article *Massacres and Profits: A Brief History of the Olympics (Victoria Street Newz, June 08)*, Maryann Abbs never once mentioned the 2008 summer Olympics in Beijing.

China is going all out to throw the biggest and best party ever in August, basically so that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) can glorify itself and promote China as a rising power on the world stage.

However, the Party's paranoia grows with each passing day, much of it around the fact the estimated 30,000 journalists descending on Beijing for the Games might just report on something unsavoury going on under its totalitarian rule.

Security is a big concern, and China has created a special 100,000 anti-terrorist force for the Olympics, according to recent news reports. This crack anti-terror squad - which means China will be a police state when the world comes to visit - will be backed up by 400,000 city volunteers and a million 'social volunteers.'

China-watchers say that while there is a theoretical possibility of an Al Qaeda attack, the CCP's secret worry is that trouble will arise from within the country.

In the past few years, thousands of foreigners working in China were not allowed to renew their visas and had to leave the country. Apparently the regime is worried that if there is any trouble, these expats would be on the 'wrong side.'

The CCP plans to force at least a million migrant labourers and other 'undesirables' out of Beijing for the duration of the Olympics so that things look nice for the influx of foreign visitors.

In an effort to ensure the athletes don't choke to death on the terrible pollution, cars will only be allowed on the streets on alternate days from July 20 to September 20, and most vehicles from outside Beijing will be banned from coming into the city at all. This of course will interfere with locals' efforts to make a living.

Although the CCP promised to improve human rights when initially awarded the Games, the opposite has happened, particularly regarding the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners which has been intensified since January.

Since the crackdown on Falun Gong in 1999, the Party has been orchestrating a most nasty persecution, its aim being to eradicate the group. Hundreds of thousands have been arbitrarily arrested, jailed without trial, brainwashed and brutally tortured. Untold numbers have been disabled; thousands have died.

Photos thanks to the Street News Service (www.street-papers.org)

Top: Paramilitary police maintain correct postures with crosses on their backs during a training session at a military base in Shenyang, Liaoning province May 6, 2008. This paramilitary unit will be responsible for the security of the Olympic soccer venue in Shenyang during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, local media reported. China's paramilitary forces must ensure domestic stability for the Beijing Olympics as well as tackle terrorist threats, commanders said at a security meeting. The Chinese characters on the background board read "strong military". Picture taken May 6, 2008. REUTERS/Stringer (CHINA).

Bottom: A security guard walks past one of the five official mascots of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games at a park in Beijing August 3, 2007. REUTERS/Jason Lee (CHINA)

Then there's the macabre practice of harvesting of Falun Gong practitioners' organs to supply the lucrative transplant industry. Two investigations found that around 42,000 practitioners have been killed on demand for their organs which were sold to foreign transplant tourists (organharvestinvestigation.net).

Given this, it is not surprising that the 2008 Beijing Olympics has been compared to Hitler's Games in Nazi Germany in 1936.

Giving the Games to a communist dictatorship is turning out to be a big headache for the International Olympic Committee. The latest problem is media freedom, with TV broadcasters currently battling with organizers to be allowed to report from areas other than Olympic venues.

This is making the regime very nervous, which isn't too surprising when you consider China's long history of repression of free speech. With 26 journalists currently behind bars, China is the world's biggest jailer of journalists.

One of the CCP's greatest fears is that roving TV cameras outside the Olympic village might show Falun Gong practitioners spilling the beans about the genocide going on in their own back yard.

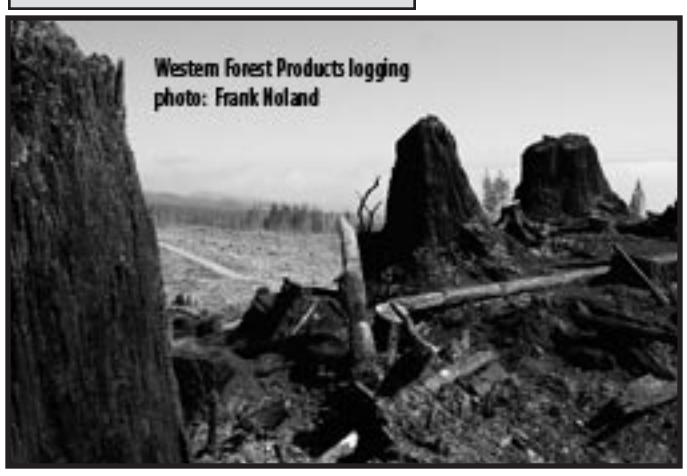
Since China was awarded the Games in 2001, increasing media scrutiny has meant that the true nature of the regime has gradually been exposed for all to see - a nature that is the antithesis of the Olympic spirit of peace and harmony. It'll be interesting to see how things unfold in the coming weeks.

Joan Quain, Victoria.

Dear Streetnewz;

I was appauled by your June issue stating the olympics are only for power. I would like a disclaimer and wish you would clean your people up and refocus on the environment. Quit spitting, we are all doing a good job. Keep communicating and call my father at <email withheld>. He is a chemical engineer and could perhaps fix your ink so as to you are not spoiling your fingers with the debries on the paper. Just ask <email withheld>, otherwise wait for the ink to dry before you fold and deliver the newspaper.

S Storey-Cooper



150 years of colonization

***by Kristen** (excerpted from www.angelfire.com/apes/hatrackman)*

On August 4th the city will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Crown Colony of B.C.--so 150 years since the Crown officially took over this land and began pretending to own it. WE will be meeting at the Totem poles in front of the B.C. Museum at 9 a.m. to sing, drum, pray, and otherwise remember that this land does not and never did belong to the Crown--that this land like all land belongs to no one.

In this way we support all of our brothers and sisters who went before us, honouring the earth not as a possession to be manipulated and sold for profit, but as a gift to respect and care for and enjoy and SHARE with each other and with every other living thing... Some of those brothers and sisters walked in the Coast Salish Way, and we will honour them at this time; but we also remember people from all Ways and all tribes who have suffered at the hands of the Crown, be they native to the Americas, or to Europe, or Africa, or Asia, or anywhere else on this sweet earth where the arm of the Crown has reached (god knows the "sun never sets on the British Empire," but NOT FOR LONG). So instead of celebrating 150 years of the Crown robbing people of their right to enjoy the earth without having to becoming either slaves or profiteers, let's celebrate a future where we might get beyond all that.

This celebration is related to the Tent City that will be going up in Victoria sometime over the next few weeks--- in the sense that the Tent City will be a place where people can live without having to pay the Queen and her minions for the service (whether in the form of mortgage payments or rent.) Tent City is a symbol of our collective desire to move OUT of a system that denies life and into a way of being that affirms life.

Lots of love, and strength to you, whatever form your struggle takes. May you all have as much peace and joy and beauty as possible, and the courage to undergo those necessary difficulties along the way (may they be as small as possible, and sandwiched between much sweetness.)

Goodbye Bill Livant

In June, Bill Livant suffered a stroke and died. Bill was "always there" and ready to share. He gave so much to his community. Bill's indomitable spirit will be remembered and cherished.

Memorial for Bill : Saturday August 23rd

TIME: 2:00 PM
LOCATION: Victoria, BC, Canada
University of Victoria
School of Music
MacLaurin Building, B
Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

Bill's Memorial Web Site : billlivant.blogspot.com

Innovative Solutions to Homelessness

from the Committee to End Homelessness in Victoria

This committee has been active for a couple of years trying to get the voices of the homeless heard in Victoria.

The Committee is made up of housed and homeless together and has been successful in getting homeless representatives on the Housing Action Team of the CRD and on the Commission to End Homelessness chaired by Ted Hughes.

The HAT team has managed to get very few permanent homes for the homeless so far so Tony Hoar and other members of the Committee have launched the MOTHERS project. The MOTHERS project is meant to assist those who are still on the streets by searching for funding for 20 tent trailers to be towed by bikes (photo below).

While our funding request to Vancity Credit Union wends its way through the process we are working with Tony to make life easier for street people. We are upgrading shopping carts that the groceries and shops don't have a further use for by adding larger wheels and making sure that the Police know that these are not stolen goods. Thrifty Foods has shown some interest and Walmart in Duncan has given us three carts to start with which Tony has begun to modify as shown in the above photo.

For more information and details, please contact Tony's Trailers @ tonystrailers.com or call Tony Hoar at 250-743-9915 or our media contact Phil Lyons at 250-381-0033.

Another idea about where to donate your $100 bribe ....

Why sign over your $100 Climate Action Dividend cheque to Pacifica Housing's "Clover Place"? It's more than just helping those less fortunate, it makes good economic sense!

- Homelessness comes at a cost to society. Currently there are an estimated 1,240 homeless or near homeless residents in Victoria costing taxpayers more than $50,000 each in support services, 33 per cent higher than the cost of housing and supporting these individuals.
- Where is this additional money going? The Victoria Mayor's task force on the homeless reports that "over 20 funding agencies already spend an estimated $76 million annually on housing, mental health and addiction services. By not addressing the needs of the homeless population in Greater Victoria, we are spending at least $62 million in other services, such as policing, prisons, hospital services, emergency shelter, clean up, etc."
- For example, the Victoria Police Department has identified a group of 324 homeless residents who were responsible for 23,033 police encounters over a period of 40 months, at a cost of $9.2 million to the City of Victoria.
- Who are these people? Many have fallen on hard times, and many are ill, both need help to re-enter society. 1 in 5 Canadians will suffer from mental illness in their lives. Every Canadian will be touched directly or indirectly, and in the homeless population, mental illness and substance abuse are over-represented- 66 per cent of all homeless residents admitted to hospital by Vancouver Island Health Authority have a mental health or substance use related condition.

How your donation can help…. every $100 is a step closer to making Clover Place a reality.

Pacifica Housing is an established non-profit society that currently manages 560 units of housing for families and individuals in Victoria and Nanaimo, and provides outreach and support services to the "hard to house" and homeless.

Pacifica Housing is about "housing with a heart" and believes in the combination of two philosophical approaches to housing the homeless:
==> Housing First- every citizen deserves a home off the streets, and
==> Peer Support- a client-centered approach of meaningful supports to improve the quality of life for the client, and to move toward a more productive existence.

Experience has shown that these two approaches, in combination, can break the cycle of homelessness.

Pacifica is already seeing just how successful this combination can be with the Medewiwin Apartments, established in 2002 and already the recipient of a CMHC Best Practices Award.

The proposed Clover Place at 3291 Douglas Street will continue this model to provide 18 supported housing units for the chronically homeless and homeless at risk target populations. Grants have already been secured from a variety of funding agencies, partnerships and foundations to fund the acquisition and major capital costs, but additional support is needed to finish the individual units. We need your $100 to make our fundraising goal of $200,000.

For further information please phone 250-385-2131 or visit Pacifica's website at www.pacificahousing.ca, or simply endorse your cheque and mark it "For Deposit Only to Pacifica Housing" & mail it or drop off to 827 Fisgard St., Victoria BC V8W 1R9. Charitable tax receipts will be issued for all donations.

The Advocate: Demythologizing Poverty

by W. Robert Arnold

The next myth that I would like to debunk is the one about everyone on welfare being a fraud. Apparently, if one listens to the mythology, nearly everyone on welfare defrauds the government of millions of dollars per year. Every time someone is found guilty of welfare fraud it is reported in the media in the same way that another robbery by John Dillinger would've been handled in the old days.

The reality of the situation is that in 2007, the last year for which I was able to obtain statistics from the Ministry of Housing and Social Development, there were just 55 convictions for welfare fraud, the value of which was a little over $1 million.

If you won $1 million in the lottery and had to split it with 54 other people you wouldn't think that it was a great amount. It is not even $20,000.

In the same year there was an average of 140,000 people on income assistance. This means that less than 1% of the people on welfare were convicted of fraud in that year. In fact, there were less than 1% of the people on welfare even charged with fraud that year.

The biggest welfare frauds are not actually income assistance recipients. Landlords, for instance, in the downtown Eastside of Vancouver were renting single rooms to up to four people and charging them all the $325 rent allowed by the Ministry, thereby defrauding the Ministry of at least $1000 per room per month. This was reported in the Vancouver Sun on March 23 of this year.

There have been cases where workers for the Ministry set up dummy accounts and defrauded the Ministry of a lot of money before being caught. These cases of course are not widely reported in the media.

Because people are given so little money to exist on by the Ministry I am sure some of them do not declare little bits of money or goods that come into their possession from time to time. This is what I call a survival technique; not welfare fraud.

I have often wondered why, when someone is found to be defrauding the federal government by cutting corners on their income tax it is called cheating, yet when someone cheats on their reporting to the Ministry and gets away with $100 and is discovered it is called fraud. Calling it fraud makes it seem more serious and more criminal than cheating. This is another form of poor bashing and scapegoating that takes place in our society.

The Ministry is letting people know more clearly what they must declare and what the penalties should they be caught not declaring income will be; and this has apparently decreased the incidence of cheating on welfare. The ministry is to be congratulated on this effort. People need to know clearly what is expected of them.

The next time you hear someone talking about welfare fraud as though it is a big thing, give them this article; or at least the facts in it. Tell them also that a single person on welfare has to live on $610 a month. I suspect that many working people, who have not had to resort to welfare, do not know this.

When we have a Universal Guaranteed Adequate Income, we will no longer have to spend big money to find and prosecute people who cheat from time to time on welfare. My guess is that it actually costs more to investigate and prosecute people who cheat from time to time on their welfare than they realize from their crime.

Now if the Ministry could raise the rates to the point where people didn't have to cheat, I would really be cheering for them.

Robert is a 65 year old man who has fought poverty, his own and others, for over 45 years. He is President of the National Anti Poverty Organization, where he helps the voices of poor people be heard in the halls of power.

Negative Block Voting == Democracy In Action

by Gerry Masuda

Parents are still fighting local school closures due to inadequate funding of school boards.

Parents must understand that inadequate funding of schools is a political rather than an educational issue.

In the past, petitions, demonstrations, meetings with MLAs and government ministers have usually proved ineffective - soothing words but no action.

What I am suggesting is the idea of the Negative Block-Vote Pledge (NBVP). It can be looked upon as a petition with teeth.

The NBVP opens with a pledge made by those who sign that they pledge to register to vote and block-vote against the governing party. The reason for taking this action would then be described. In this example, the reason could be inadequate school board budgets resulting in the scheduled closing of Koksilah Elementary School. This is all that is necessary. After getting signatures from those affected and their supporters, present a copy to your local governing party candidate with a copy sent to the Premier.

The only follow up required is to phone/email each signer a week after signing and confirm that they are now registered to vote. If not, offer to help them by driving them to the local Service BC Office and helping them register. Before the elections phone/email each signer reminding them of their pledge and recommending a candidate to block-vote for.

It would only take one riding election upset which can be attributed to the NBVP to energize the public. Whenever the governing party's actions or legislation upset voters, the NBVP could be used to help focus the anger.

The Negative Block-Vote is peoples' democracy in action.

From Logging to Real Estate

by Frank Noland

Western Forest Products is building roads near Jordan River.

They want them to service new subdivisions (since, with the help of Rich Coleman, they have gone into the real estate business). If they don't get permission to build houses, they'll use the roads for logging.

Not everybody is happy about this.

Yesterday (July 10) a hundred or so people expressed thier displeasure at a rally held in front of Victoria's library. About halfway through, Vicki Husband, of the Sierra Club, announced that the adjacent Provincial offices had gone into "lockdown" mode, presumably because the people quietly listening to the speeches presented some sort of threat.

The library remained open.

Mantle of Impunity

by Chris Cook

Today I listened to the first of the new Republican attack ads aimed at the hearts and minds of America's voters. In the one I heard, a soldier proclaims "The Surge worked, and no-one can deny that." Surge is the euphemism accepted by governments and the media for the aerial bombing of Iraqis in their homes by America's armed forces. It is a banal term, meant to make it easy to forget the gruesome reality of what is being done. Now that grotesque and terrifying reality is being used as electioneering fodder.

The merciless and indiscriminate destruction of entire communities of human beings, human beings blown dead for democracy, blasted to tiny fragments by bombs and missiles and rockets and bullets fired from airplanes and warships and tanks and cannons is not only O.K., if the Republicans are to be believed, but is something to get out the vote for. The young, the old, the innocent and corrupt, unlamented and blown to pieces together are proof in death of the success of George W. Bush's policies, and so his abettors deserve reelection.

How did we get here? How is it we find ourselves in these early years of the 21st Century backsliding to a time when torture was excused as a necessary evil, and mass murder served as society's primary diplomatic tool? Where did we go so wrong? Who is responsible and what can be done to retrieve the justice we have sacrificed to fear and the honour we've tossed like a used tissue away?

The other George Bush had a war or two. Over the Christmas holidays in 1989, commander and chief Bush ordered Panama City bombed. The U.S. military dutifully obeyed and uncounted thousands of Panamanians were either blown to smithereens, or perished in the fires that swept through the barrios of the city. Bush's destruction of much of Panama City was done without the blessing of the United Nations, the thin veneer of justification offered the American people being expiation of the murderous, drugs-dealing thug, Manuel Noriega. Central America's "Hitler" was placed in power by the Central Intelligence Agency, and decades earlier had occasion to know George H. W. Bush in his then role as CIA director.

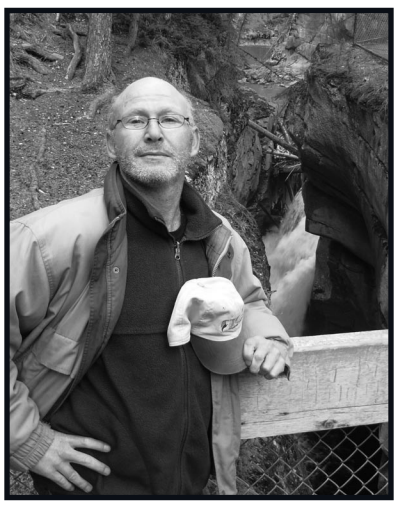
The uncensured invasion and its attendant body count emboldened George I. A little more than a year after Panama City's barrios burned, Bush launched another invasion, this time half a world away, against another former CIA man cum Hitler incarnate, Saddam Hussein. Following the destruction of uncounted tens of thousands of Iraqis in what was gleefully reported on television as a "turkey-shoot," the victorious president triumphantly declared, "By God, we've kicked the Vietnam Syndrome once and for all!"

Though conducted with the U.N.'s imprimatur, a little scratching beneath the stated justifications for Operation Desert Storm reveals a litany of fabrication sold as truth to the world. The lies told were large and numerous enough to dispel the patina of legitimacy for the invasion granted by the U.N. and echoed by a coalition of willing participants as a massive crime against the peace. That George Bush the first's invasion was planned long before Iraq reclaimed oil fields seized by their not so neighbourly neighbour, Kuwait, and the fact Hussein was essentially suckered into invading Kuwait by April Gillespie, Bush's "man" in Iraq, was politely ignored by western nations, eager to cash in on Iraq's oil via the Emir of Kuwait's gratitude, and their Arab collaborators, most notably the Saudis, who benefit Iraq's oil being kept off the market. The crimes committed during the fighting of this U.N.-sanctioned war on both sides were never tried, and though George H. W. Bush lost his reelection bid, his scofflaw legacy was inherited by his successor.

George H. W. Bush was good in his time, (if good, like power, be measured by the number and magnitude of transgressions against law and decency committed without the consequence of justice) but Bill Clinton had him by a long chalk. While Bush could boast Iran-Contra, Panama, Iraq, and the Savings and Loan scandal, (in which at least one of his sons made like a bandit) Clinton would quickly surpass the elder Bush, spear-heading phase two of Desert Storm: prolonging the crippling embargo against Iraq (and Cuba), bombing Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, and of course, destroying the Former Yugoslav Republic; all accomplished with barely a murmur of protest from either the press, engrossed in the president's sexual peccadillos and busily devoting their considerable investigative powers identifying semen staining a certain blue dress, or the court of public opinion. It was as if, as Harold Pinder famously remarked, "It never happened. Nothing ever happened. Even while it was happening it wasn't happening. It didn't matter." But it did happen. It happened, and Bush and Clinton got away with it. The systemic horror machine that is the United States of America to millions around the globe got away with it.

George W. Bush inherited this mantle of impunity, and like his predecessors, he's moved the goal posts a yard or two further. His crimes are myriad, and will seemingly not be called to account; and it seems too, no presidential nominee will alter the chaotic arc of recent history.

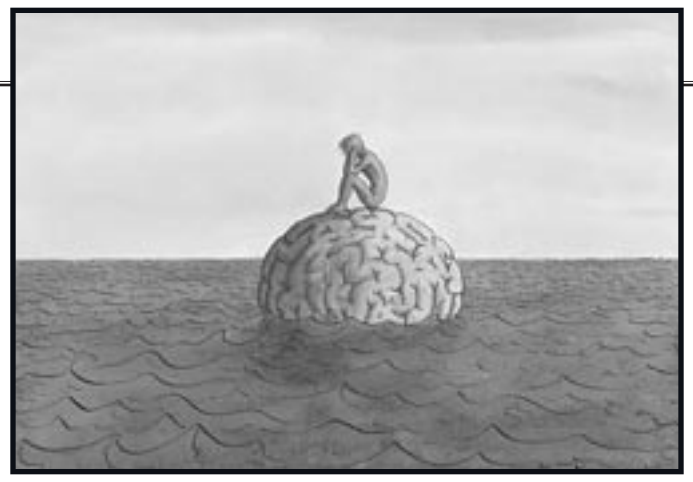
It's a dangerous moment, as empires go; the only stage of development following the crapulent flourishing of unanswerable criminality being collapse. Without equality before the law, civilization dies. Without the guarantee that those endangering the life and liberty of the polity will be arrested their illegal endeavours and brought before a panel as impartial as is possible to be judged and sentenced accordingly anarchy prevails; not the anarchy of literalists, poets, or utopians, where Humankind is finally freed the fetters of the arbitrary diktats of Church and State, but a jungle where savagery rules, and radios jingo.



Chris Cook is managing editor to PacificFreePress.com, an online news source, and hosts Gorilla Radio from the studios of CFUV, at the University of Victoria, Canada.

Eugenics: Improving the Species ?

by C'daoim



Eugenics, now there is a word that brings chills to the people that lived through the 1930s.

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary it means "of the production of fine (esp, human) offspring." Webster's New Collegiate goes a little further with "a science that deals with the improvement (as by control of human mating) of hereditary qualities of a race or breed." So what we are talking about is the breeding of the perfect race or the biological solution to implementing social management. Apparently there was a great fear of "racial degeneration" (McLaren 309) if something wasn't done to end the impurity that was creeping inside of the population.

Evidence was visible all throughout society. There were children recognized as problems due to their deviant behaviour, people with mental health issues, the 'feebleminded' (a pretty broad term), women with bad 'reputations' (no mention of the men involved in this) or even mothers with poor mothering qualities. It seemed they "…posed a serious threat to society inasmuch as it was a primary cause of poverty, crime and prostitution. What measures should the province take to protect itself from the internal and external threat of the reproduction of the feeble-minded?" (McLaren 310)

If this weren't frightening enough, McLaren also points out "It comes as somewhat of a surprise to find in a [the Canadian] Medical Association Journal an impassioned debate over the merits of capitalism and socialism and the police state" (McLaren 307). This was a part of the discourse surrounding the idea of introducing eugenics into the social framework. Economic theories required protection from the citizens of British Columbia. According to the powers that be the answer was obvious - sexual sterilization of the "sub-normal" citizens.

This would mean that as of April 7, 1933 we knew the definition of what it meant to be a British Columbian.

The 1930s turns out to be quite a decade in the history of British Columbia. It was only 75 years ago and the government was unleashing police forces against thousands of starving homeless people because they wanted jobs, food and a place to lay their heads at night. We can also see that the "Feeble-Minded" were seen as a threat to society so a biological solution was enacted in the Legislature.

Today we've become much more diplomatic in the way we treat those with mental illnesses. We allow them to live on the streets as long as they are not visible. If they are they just get arrested and have their belongings taken from them. The government gives them money each month, not quite enough to afford housing and food but at least some of our citizenry can pretend. The rest of the 'sub-normal' citizens have new titles assigned to them such as addicts, homeless, poor, working poor or even "those people."

Can you believe that someone is actually allowed to decide which drugs are legal as substances of addiction such as alcohol and tobacco? Then some of us have learned to divide ourselves over the idea that these addictions create a healthier society then any other addictions. Some of us have learned to condemn fellow citizens that are less fortunate while all the time knowing that not everyone can be wealthy at the same time in the land of equal opportunity. Then there is the invented social improvement called gentrification that allows for the creation of the NIMBY effect. This certainly keeps the citizens separated from helping each other.

When will we realize that we don't have to live like this?

Our leaders have followed a system that creates rising energy costs that drive the cost of everything else up. No affordable housing is built. Soon enough the middle-class will be a part of the 'sub-normal' citizenry. Well, we could just close down even more schools and shut down the hospitals. And of course we have built enough streets for everyone to live on.

Or we could start to understand that we are all British Columbians and deserve roofs over our heads. We do have the natural resources, and housing shouldn't cost a lifetime of work because someone privately owns our resources. We could understand that one addiction is not creating a healthier society then another addiction. We could realize that the idea of solar power eliminates the cost of energy from our budgets. We could seek equal betterment for all citizens not equal opportunity for some. We could discover that knowledge is power by making education free at all levels, for everyone. We could have a health care system that makes a mockery of the present standards. We could try something that has never been done; instead of electing followers we could all be learning to lead a democracy.

Become informed … Society needs you.

Sources:

McLaren, Angus. "The Creation of a Haven for "Human Thoroughbreds:" The Sterilization of the Feeble-Minded and the Mentally Ill in British Columbia." McKay 305-330

McKay, Ian. ed. The Challenge of Modernity a Reader on Post-Confederation Canada. Toronto, Montreal: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1992.

The Lie Makers

by Brian Mason

Maher Arar is receding from the public mind. He's had his official inquiry, a formal apology from government ("We're sorry": how Canadian!) and been given financial compensation, so the media seem to think it's time for closure on his case. Except you can't bring closure to a steadily advancing phenomenon, one that's taking our nation towards a darker age.

Arar was part of a UVic panel discussion last March along with his heroic wife Monia Mazigh and UBC president Stephen Toope, whose Fact Finder report for the Commission of Inquiry formed the basis of the compensation package eventually awarded by the federal government to Arar. Victoria was the first stop on a cross-country speaking tour intended to maintain the profile of this case by underscoring its importance for individual freedom and democracy.

The federal government, of course, and the corporate media regard the Arar inquiry as evidence that our system, imperfect as it may be, has both the integrity and the wherewithal to correct mistakes as they're uncovered. All, in other words, is basically as it should be.

But a patch won't halt rust. While what happened to Arar may have been simply just another case for our less-than-intrepid national (in)security agencies, it was symptomatic of the new political order gaining ascendancy in Canada.

Prime Minister Harper's far-right ideology coupled with his rigid command-and-control style of leadership are fueling the rise of authoritarianism. Even former justice John Gomery, hardly an alarmist, who headed the inquiry into the federal sponsorship scandal, has lately decried the secrecy and concentration of power in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). To be sure, one of Harper's chief advisors, Tom Flanagan, has been quite open about the authoritarian ambitions of the conservative movement in Canada.

Authoritarian regimes generally begin small, almost imperceptibly at first, but always end big. In their early stages, they can appear benign, sensible to a degree, even necessary to fend off a real or perceived bogeyman. For people to willingly give up their rights and freedoms, an enemy is needed, with a manufactured one serving as well as the real thing. Be it terrorism, threats to the economy, fears of an oil shortage, or menacing environmental activists, it doesn't much matter: any fear factor will do as long as it facilitates the erosion of civil liberties and the concentration of power at a single source.

Unlike grassroots movements, authoritarianism, by its very nature, is driven from the top, usually by a single person or a small cabal. Secrecy and discipline are its anthems, backed up and bankrolled, particularly in the case of Canada, by corporate power – especially that of the corporate media. Time-proven strategies to advance the march of repression get introduced gradually. Information becomes more controlled, propaganda widespread, opposition is demonised and belittled, funding for social causes slashed or terminated, censorship imposed, post-secondary education reoriented to support a corporate agenda, and intellectuals are slowly marginalised. Each strategy has made stark appearances since Harper and sympathetic right-wing provincial governments came to power. Together they compose the lie-making machine.

Arar's kidnapping and torture by (in)security agencies, coming barely one year after 9/11, when authorities were in a spooked-up state of clamp-down, was not an isolated accident of exaggerated security shenanigans. Rather, it was a piece of a growing pattern of authoritarianism in Canada: No-fly and no-entry lists, Bill C-36 (our very own anti-terrorism legislation), huge shows of force by police at peaceful demonstrations, increased use of weaponry (the taser) by authorities, corporate stranglehold of the mainstream media, growing militarisation and use of patriotic slogans by government, merging of corporate and government ideologies, aligning of foreign policy with the U.S. imperial agenda, and so on.

In this climate, politics becomes the dance of a single partner. Democracy gets narrowed, and the civic sphere hollowed out. If a passive, disengaged citizenry – programmed to work harder and consume more each day before recuperating at night in front of the television or laptop in order to repeat the performance the next day – is the best ally an authoritarian agenda could hope for, then the right-wing has it nailed in Canada.

As for the Arar commission, it released a second report, the one you never hear about, calling for the establishment of independent oversight authorities to ride herd on our secretive, national (in)security agencies. This would only ever happen if Harper thought for a minute it would give the PMO more direct power over these disparate bureaucracies. It could still happen.

Submitted by Brian Mason, a writer and philosopher who lives in James Bay.

Graphics on this page thanks to Marian Kamensky, in Slovakia. www.humor-kamensky.sk

Pedal To Petal

Urban Agriculture Collective

Pedal to Petal is a collectively owned and operated project whose mission is to:

* Reduce carbon emissions, reduce landfill and reduce dependence on fossil fuels and chemical fertilizers.

* Create employment for our members that aligns with our deep commitment to environmental protection, sustainability, social justice and community self-sufficiency.

* Increase the amount of food being grown in the city of Victoria and assist in the effort to provide fresh, healthy food to anyone who wants it, regardless of their income.

We aim to achieve these goals with the implementation of a Domestic Food Waste Pick-up

According to a CRD study, kitchen and yard waste comprise 30% of our household garbage. Backyard composting is one way to reduce the amount of food waste being trucked to landfill.

Currently, the CRD is conducting a pilot project in which domestic food waste is being picked up from residences and trucked to a compost facility. This is a commendable project and it inspires us to take this idea one step further and work towards an even greater reduction in fossil fuel use.

Pedal to Petal members are offering to pick up your domestic food waste using bicycles, and deliver it to backyard compost piles where it will be turned into nutrient rich compost without the use of powered tools or equipment.

Green Your Campbell Cash

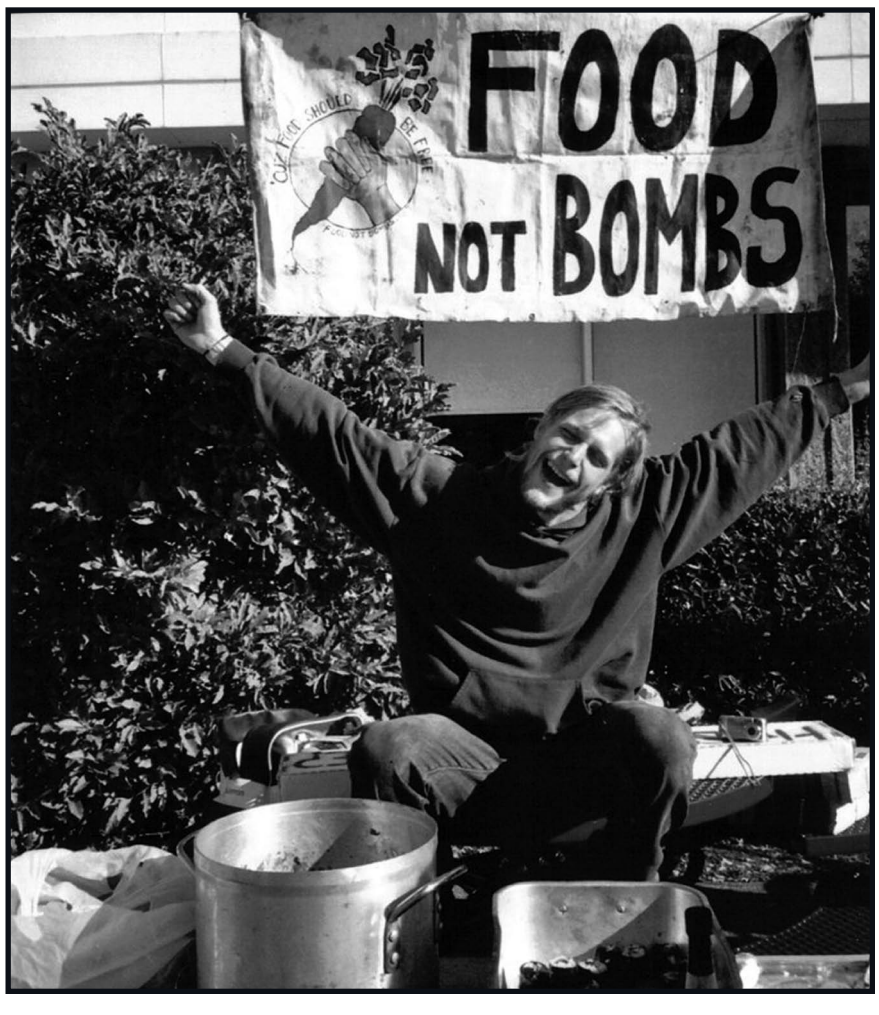
The Tyee.ca has a promotion called "Green Your Campbell Cash" which invites people to submit projects that collectively tackle climate change, and offers everyone a chance to vote for their favourites, or even help fund them.

Two weeks after the launch of the website, groups so far have posted more than 50 grassroots projects seeking support, and the site has received about 24,000 page views, an "overwhelming" response, says Tyee marketing co-ordinator Lisa Manfield.

Pedal to Petal has a listing on Green Your Campbell Cash site: thetyee.ca/greenyourcampbellcash/node/225.

For More Information about Pedal to Petal

Send an email to pedaltopetal@yahoo.com
or visit the website: pedaltopetal.blogspot.com



Watch for an article about a visit to a Co-operative Agricultural Project in Sancti Spiritus Province, Cuba, in the September/ October issue of the Watershed Sentinel.

watershedsentinel.ca

above: a Cuban revolutionary who fought alongside Che Guevara; Andrew Barry from Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (vancubasolidarity.com); and other Cubans.

left: Janine Bandcroft, Street Newz founder & current co-ordinator

Neighbourhood Pocket Markets Local and Organic

this list is published weekly and may not be entirely accurate. contact Lee for more information (385-7974)

This week we're featuring blueberries, apricots, peaches, apples, raspberries, and strawberries – the perfect ingredients for those mid-summer fruit salads – and they're all from BC!

Other beautiful produce on offer this week: baby spinach, salad greens, chards, cilantro, parsley, kales, lettuces, braising greens, , bunch beets, cukes, new potatoes, vibrant peppers, Portabello and Crimini mushrooms, and beautiful red and yellow tomatoes on the vine.

Where can you get your fix of tasty, hearty and healthy organic produce (with a local and BC focus)? At the Pocket Markets, of course!!!

CENTENNIAL SQUARE MARKET: TUESDAYS NOON – 5 on the plaza between the MacPherson Theatre and the info kiosk on Pandora

FERNWOOD COMMUNITY MARKET: TUESDAYS 4:30-8:30 in Fernwood Square

CLOSED UNTIL SEPT: ROYAL ROADS UNIVERSITY: WEDNESDAYS 12:00-4:00 in the Grant Building, first floor doors facing the castle

CLOSED UNTIL SEPT: U VIC STUDENT CENTRE: 12:30-4:30 TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS

COLWOOD FARMERS MARKET: WEDNESDAYS 4:30-7:30 on the parking lot at Colwood Plaza, Sooke Road at Goldstream Avenue

ESTEVAN VILLAGE MARKET: THURSDAYS 2:30-6:30 Estevan Village

GORDON HEAD: THURSDAYS 4:00-7:00 in the parking lot at St. Dunstan's Anglican Church, 1806 San Juan (at Tyndall)

HUMBOLDT VALLEY MARKET: FRIDAYS 1-5:30 on the plaza in front of Café Mela, 788 Humboldt Street

JUBILEE MARKET: FRIDAYS 1-5:00 in the parking lot behind Jubilee Pharmasave, 1775 Fort Street

GORGE/TILLICUM MARKET: SATURDAYS 9:30-2 in Pearkes Arena, behind Tillicum Mall

STRAWBERRY VALE MARKET: SATURDAYS 9:30-2 at Strawberry Vale Community Hall, 11 High Street

VIC WEST: SATURDAYS 10-2 on the boulevard at Craigflower and Raynor, by the community garden

QUADRA VILLAGE FARMERS MARKET: SATURDAYS 10:30-3 on Kings Road, near Café Fantastico and the community garden

IS THERE A PLACE YOU'D LIKE TO SEE A POCKET MARKET - your office, school, recreation centre, community centre, community garden, public parking lot? Give us a call – we can help you investigate the opportunity. 385-7974

Damming the Peace:
BC Hydro's plan for the Peace River

by Don Startin

This series is designed to inform Street Newz readers of the in depth issues surrounding this proposal. As in my series on Afghanistan, readers must realize that I am an "instant" expert, the type we all like to deride! Sadly I never got to the Peace Valley, and now my wife and I are a mite ancient to drive up there even if we could afford the gas and the ferry.

So my offering is based on one hour and a half presentation by Hydro, a similar one by the Peace River Environment Association, lots of reading, and lots of discussions with people who have had hands on experience of the area now, the existing dams, and the halcyon days before global warming, the exploitation of the oil sands, and the damming of the B.C. Peace by the Bennett and Canyon dams.

I urge my readers to take a look at a map of North Eastern B.C., North Western Alberta, and the Western North West Territories, and follow the path of the water that runs through our B.C. Peace.

In the good old days the Finley and Parsnip rivers met at Finley Forks where they became the Peace. Unimpeded the water flowed east till it crossed the Alberta border, and became the Alberta Peace. It continued more or less east until it reached the town of Peace River Alberta where it swung north till it joined the once mighty Athabasca at the west end of Lake Athabasca. The river brought with it vast quantities of silt. It also brought generous quantities of ice floes at spring breakup, of which more anon, because they were vital to the ecological balance of the Athabasca Delta.

Wood Buffalo National Park spans most of the delta, the largest fresh water delta in the world. Flowing north now the combined rivers become the Slave, which flows into Slave Lake. Here the waters form another significant delta. Exiting the lake the waters form the Mackenzie River which flows northward into the Beaufort Sea through the Mackenzie Delta.

Wacky Bennett, of evil memory, put in two dams on the B.C. Peace. The Bennett Dam with the Willesden Reservoir behind it, and the Peace Canyon Dam with a reservoir behind it. The Willesden Reservoir is the biggest in North America. Its bottom was not properly cleared of unmerchantable timber and brush so that the Socreds could fill it before an election, and look good. The rotting underwater vegetation and the silt from the Parsnip and Findley rivers combine to give off enormous quantities of methane which is a much more deleterious greenhouse gas than CO2.

Don't believe proponents of big hydro when they tell you it's clean.

The Willesden Reservoir is not a good place for recreation. Every so often a rotten tree will break free from its roots, and shoot up to the surface like a classic Strait of Georgia deadhead posing a grave hazard to boaters. The banks of the reservoir are clay. As the water level fluctuates down when power is made by releasing water through the turbines, and up again when the turbines are shut off, the banks are eroded. This has two effects. The soggy low bank waterfront does not lend itself to boating and swimming beaches. The water from the reservoir leaches into the clay banks and picks up methyl mercury. This finds its way into the reservoir fish. If you eat more than a very small amount of this fish you get mercury poisoning.

The reservoir is also hazardous to go on during winter. It is a sort of industrial aquatic desert. The Site C Dam and attendant reservoir will have most of these unpleasant attributes.

Don Startin is an activist and gardener, an ex-military man who has done many things since leaving the army. Don currently lives a life of simplicity with his wife in Victoria, B.C.

An Endangered River on an Endangered Planet

from Ruth Ann Darnall, Chairperson
Peace Valley Environment Association

I wish to make a comment regarding the Alaska Highway News item which quoted the Honourable Barry Penner, Minister of Finance, stating that "the Peace River is not an Endangered River."

Many of us find it most interesting to have read that Mr. Penner is quick to make a judgment call on the status of the Peace River (as it relates to the prospective Site C project). Mr. Penner is very quick off the mark on an issue that is clearly not in his own backyard. He is entitled to his own opinion, but in the article he clearly speaks as the Minister of Environment.

Minister Penner represents the riding of Chilliwack-Kent in southern British Columbia, a riding that is very close to the Pitt River and the adjoining Pinecone Burke Provincial Park. Just days before the above article was printed in our local paper, Minister Penner rejected a proposal from an independent green power producer from proceeding with a smaller, less significant hydro project on the Upper Pitt River. Reason? The project would possibly impinge upon the Pinecone Burke Provincial Park with some ugly power lines.

Noticeably, Minister Penner decreed an end to that specific energy proposal the morning after a 1000+ person meeting at the local community hall.

The Pitt River IS on the Endangered Rivers list and Mr. Penner apparently does not question its status. It is ALSO in the minister's backyard. It is apparent to many of us that 'backyard' politics is certainly alive and well, as far as Minister Penner's judgment calls are concerned.

A Native Perspective

from helen michell

bear clan family of maxan lake would like to suggest that we all have some intrests in our childrens future and have a duty to do what we have to in regards to our obligations to protect our home lands as a people of indigenous nations.

we shall have a say in the hydro projects sold to private interests for private power to be sold at higher prices that we can afford.

the agreements made are with out our consent and this is a criminal war crime of genocide on our tribes who live on salmon as a main staple, or the ollicans that we gather seasonally at kleen kleen near and around alert bay the toba inlet bute inlet and more places that are listed in power play the theft of b.c. rivers - a documentry at www.SaveOurRivers.ca. i highly recomend that all of this information gets out to the public so we can put a stop to these deals in b.c. as its in violation of our human rights, cultural and integrity rights under international law.

all of our traditional indigenous laws are in violations and we must enforce our laws as a people, and take back our inherent rights, for every one all the new settlers have to support this as it's a concern for all in that the future of our salmon and rivers are at stake. we have to expose the cambell government's plans and work to call for meetings in our areas were we live to stop it and shut down the on going destruction of our lands and rivers.

our work in this must include the proposed burn wood for power that just doesn't work as all land that are used for burn plants will in fact destroy our home lands as the way they do it is scrape all forms of wood to burn and this is destruction of soil so nothing else will grow just wash away with rain to hydro projects and its a vicious circle. we have to come up with a different plan.

if it's our power it's in unity on this issue. all politicians in b.c. should be encouraged to contact tom rankin (saveourrivers.ca) and make appointment for him and get the information flowing out and work with him in this.

thank you from bear clan of maxan lake don't forget to look up www.SaveOurRivers.ca

Photo credits: Cindy Vincent, Fort St. John

For more information:

www.peacevalley.ca, saveourrivers.ca
thinkwater.ca, flowthefilm.com
www.heartofthefraser.bcit.ca, hydrofactsbc.ca

Dear Couz,

by Jennifer Hastie

Some months ago, Couz, I wrote to Government House, telling them that I write articles for the Street Newz and asking them if I would be able to have an interview with the Honourable Steven Point. His Honour is the first native person to hold this prestigious position in our province, so I figured that he'd be awesome to interview.

What does the Lieutenant-Governor do, you ask? Well, he or she represents the Queen in Canada.

Every province in our country has one. They do a lot of constitutional things, like opening and closing the Legislature, as well as performing duties concerned with legislation. They also greet dignitaries from other countries and attend many award presentations and ceremonies throughout the province.

To my surprise and pleasure, I was eventually granted a time to go to the huge stone building, Government House, on Rockland Avenue to interview the Lt.-Gov. Oh man, was I nervous, Couz! But, was I in for a surprise. He was warm, welcoming, sincere and down-to-earth. I think that he had even taken the time to see what our Street Newz was all about, judging from a couple of comments that he made at the start of the interview.

I wanted to find out more about this man who has been a lawyer, a judge, and the head of the BC Treaty Commission. His Honour talked readily about his background. Raised as the fifth child in a family of ten children, he came from the Skowkale reserve, a small reserve near Chilliwack. His Honour went to the local public schools. He was often the only native kid in his classes from elementary years to high school years—the other native kids around, I guess, were still going to the Residential Schools.

It sounds as if His Honour was able to adapt to this environment as apparently, he was chosen to be class president year after year. I guess that you might say that he had already learned to be bi-cultural.

I asked him who gave him support during his growing up years. He mentioned a number of teachers from that time, both in elementary and high school years. He also pointed out that the elders from his tribe were there to encourage him on. Although he had a lot of support, Couz, it couldn't have been easy for him. He mentioned that restaurants at that time would often refuse to serve native customers—just an indication of where mainstream society was at that time, eh Couz.

The Lt.-Gov. went on to university after secondary school, but he didn't study law right away. His tribe asked him to run for Council, and at the young age of 23, he was elected Chief. He stayed in that position for 7 years. During that time he had the chance to get to know other native leaders, dynamic people such as Phillip Paul, George Manuel, and Joseph Gosnell, leaders trying to make things better for our native groups across Canada.

These leaders inspired him. Along with them, plus the impact of a book written by Clarence Darrow, a famous U.S.A. lawyer, helped His Honour on his way to becoming a lawyer and eventually a judge.

Our native tribes throughout Canada bestow "Indian names" on their people when an important event happens to them or when someone earns a special reputation. So far, Hon. Steven Point has been given 3 names. He is called "speaker of the house," "mountain stream," and "flying eagle." The last name has been given to him by the Blackfoot tribes. I wonder how many more names he will accumulate in his life time, Couz!

I asked the Lt.-Gov. how he sees his role during the 5 years that he will be in the office. He is well aware that his particular appointment shows society that our First Nations people are still here and are finally being recognized. The Lt.-Gov. spoke of the importance of building relationships with all people, from school children to members of organizations, both native and non-native. He wants to visit as many schools in the province that he can. I notice that already, he has made two trips to the Nuu-chah-nulth area, one to Gold River and one to Port Alberni. The young people up there really seemed to enjoy that. I'm not surprised, given this man's warm and down-to-earth personality.

His Honour was intent on saying that he wants people to know that government can be there to help us. He is well aware, given the position that he has that when he can visit communities and listen to the average person in our society, it makes them feel heard and worthwhile, therefore, building bridges between government and people of our province.

I also asked the Lt.-Gov. if he has a message for the marginalized natives in our society. He said, "Get an education. We cannot live off the land anymore." He also said, "Remember your culture and remember who you are." There was pride in that statement, Couz. And so there should be, for native people with their support system for the extended family and community, their values that are based on respect for the land and their ability to continue to survive in spite of all that has happened to them, demand a lot of respect from us.

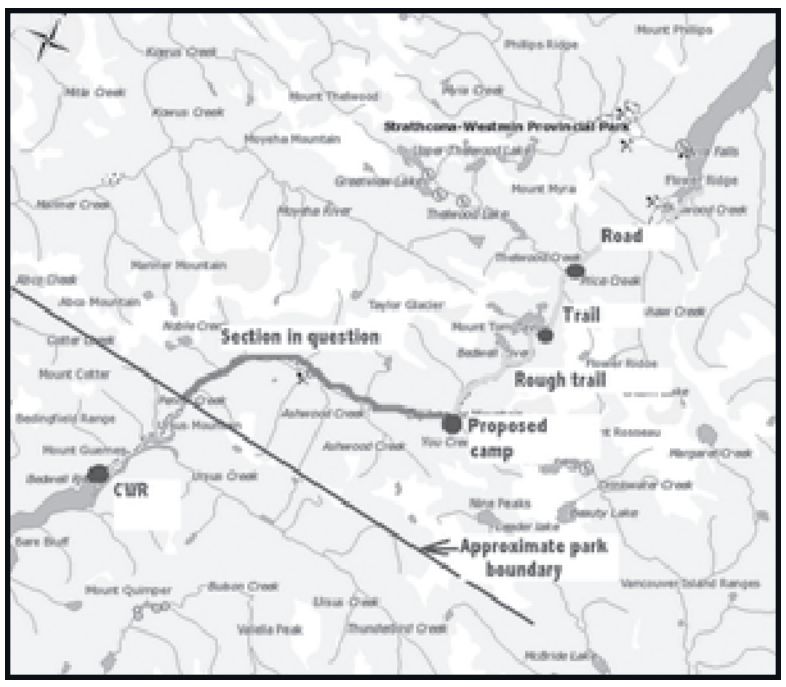
It was an honour to be able to interview this man.

Jennifer and her husband live in Victoria today. She is a healthy, active senior who enjoys writing volunteer articles for various publications.

Island Lens #104: BC Liberals Continue to Privatize Parks

by Richard Boyce - islandlens.blogspot.com

Strathcona Park was established in 1911 as the first provincial park in British Columbia; to this day it is the flagship for the entire park system. What happens in Strathcona usually sets precedent for parks throughout the province.



Clayoquot Wilderness Resort (CWR) has requested that BC Parks amend the Master Plan for Strathcona Park to allow horses into the protected lands. CWR would like to build a horse trail 14km into Strathcona Park through the Bedwell Valley to You Creek. There they plan to build tent platforms, corrals, and toilets for their exclusive clients. This camp will be located to provide easy access to Cream Lake and Bedwell Lake. The trail would start at their main resort on Bedwell River at the head of Bedwell Inlet, which is in the heart of Clayoquot Sound.

The general public will not benefit from this deal, since the resort is only accessible at great costs and the price for a stay there is very expensive. 3 Nights=$4,750 or 7 Nights=$9,450. The cost of barging horses from Tofino to the mouth of the Bedwell River, where CWR is located, is $3000 and rising with fuel prices. Last fall a group of hikers from Friends of Strathcona Park paid $500 for a water taxi so that they could hike into the Bedwell Valley. As a result of these costs the proposed horse trail would be for the exclusive use of CWR guests.

BC Parks creates Master Plans for all provincial parks after consultation with the general public as well as groups that represent park users. The policies established in these plans are then upheld by government staff and reviewed publicly every few years. Today the policy from the Master Plan for Strathcona Park states that no horses are allowed in the Bedwell Valley.

One of the main reasons for not allowing horses onto parklands is that they eat hay, which often contains seeds from invasive species resulting in the spread of noxious and exotic plants. Horses can spread the seeds from foreign grasses, thistles, genetically modified canola, alfalfa, clovers, and other non-native plants which then grow into seeding plants. In this way an entire ecosystem can be destroyed because rare native plants can not compete with newly introduced species, which spread like wildfire.

The digestive system of a horse can be very slow, allowing seeds to remain inside the stomach for as long as a two weeks. An online report from National Parks in the Austrian Alps states; "Studies have shown horses can retain weed seeds in their gut for up to 14 days and these can then germinate in manure in national parks." CWR claims they will use sterilized food for the horses, however this is next to impossible to monitor. There are also very few suppliers of sterilized hay and what little is available is extremely expensive.

Other concerns include: soil erosion from steel-shoed horses, trampling and grazing impacts on a delicate ecosystem, and damage to the banks of streams, rivers, and lakes.

The Bedwell Valley is a wilderness that provides habitat year around for Bear, Roosevelt Elk, Cougar, Wolf, and many smaller mammals. It is a safe haven for animals that are hunted everywhere else.

Interaction between horses with people and these wild animals is inevitable with a trail that will be frequented by SWR guests. The standard response by BC Fish and Wildlife, when wild animals 'threaten' people, is to shoot the animal.

Situated in the heart of the Vancouver Island Mountain Range, Strathcona park was established in part to protect significant and environmentally sensitive areas such as alpine meadows, moss beds, alpine wetlands, snow grass and sub-alpine forest communities. The occasional group of hikers who makes it all the way to the Bedwell Valley will cause very little damage to the environment. Regular groups of multiple horse riders will significantly impact this sensitive ecology.

Allowing horses into Strathcona Park may establish a precedent for all parks in BC.

Please let BC Minister of Environment Barry Penner know about your concerns. Phone: 250 387-1187 or write PO Box 9047, STN PROV GOVT, Victoria BC, V8W 9E2 env.minister@gov.bc.ca

"Ode to the Marionettes"

"Tis' oft the case in human speech,
truth lies betwixt or between
and endless speech doth weave its web,
where motives are rarely seen.

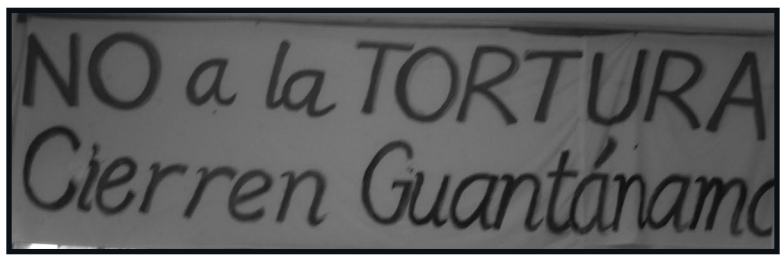
To paint such crafted language
upon the canvas of the mind
can so pervert and adjudicate
that facts themselves are blind.

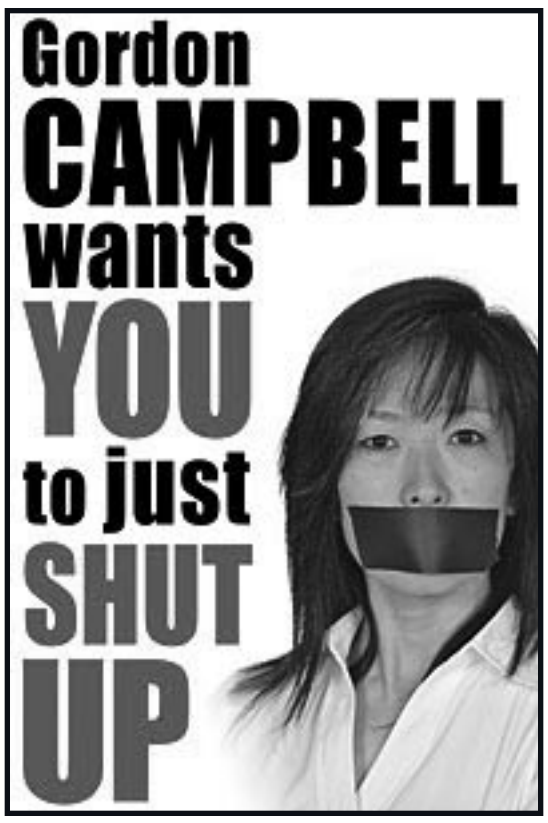
The muse reveals its tainted source
from the mind where it was wrought
uttering both riddles and rhymes,
manipulation is all that's sought.

Enamored crowds replace the actor
who laid waste to vows once spoken
where actions have replaced all words
with a stage where their trust lay broken."

© Shelley Bluejay Pierce, June 10, 2008

Seattle's Solution





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mother, they want your son

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hair, just-so
shined boots, fresh
flawless flesh
a meat sock pulled taut
over the nothingness
laces, belts, bobbles, medallions
some physical indication
of rank
of worth.
worth is the biggest thing
it is place, in order
a hierarchy, a value
what do i control
man, men, or resources
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or wounds inflicted.
position, and wallet, a matched set
ready to catch
black oil
and the waste
from the womb.

i'm no soldier, mother
this you know
and the enemy
isn't an army.
its hysterical uterus
and constipated vas defran
attached to fashion
using the fruits
of your labour
as a chrome glint reassurance
-yellowed-
for all that is absent
in lonely
bathroom mirror reflections.

j. fisher

Gordon Campbell's election gag law imposes extreme limits on any organization who wants to talk about climate change, health care, public schools, the Olympics, child care, transit, fish farms, affordable housing, run of river private power projects, carbon taxes, raw log exports, resource-dependent communities, public private partnerships, minimum wage, free trade, mental health services, offshore oil drilling, public power, electoral reform, the gateway project, post-secondary education, taxes, clean air, First Nations treaties, public safety, seniors' care, harm reduction, poverty, and more... from mid-February of this year until the May, 2009 provincial election.

www.justshutupbc.com

English: A Language for the Verbally Insane

Let's face it - English is a crazy language. There is no egg in eggplant nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple. English muffins weren't invented in England. We take English for granted, but if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square, and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham? Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend. If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it?

If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught? If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat? Sometimes I think all the folks who grew up speaking English should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane.

In what other language do people recite at a play and play at a recital? We ship by truck but send cargo by ship. We have noses that run and feet that smell. We park in a driveway and drive in a parkway. And how can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?

You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down, in which you fill in a form by filling it out, and in which an alarm goes off by going on.

And, in closing, if Father is Pop, how come Mother's not Mop?

not sure of the author, but thanks to bluejay (and many wishes for her health and wellness) for passing this along!

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